

**Read to Achieve Background Information**  
**Joint Legislative Commission on Governmental Operations, January 28, 2014 Meeting**

**Read to Achieve Program**

Senate Bill 795, Excellent Public Schools Act, passed first reading in the Senate on April 25, 2012. Section 7A.1 of S.L. 2012-142 (Budget) enacted portions of the Excellent Public Schools Act, including the Read to Achieve Program (Program).

The Read to Achieve Program was created to ensure that all children read at or above grade level by third grade through early identification and services for reading difficulties, increased parental notification of academic need and progress, and grade promotion based partly on reading proficiency. The Program requires that:

- The State Board of Education (SBE) must develop and implement a comprehensive reading achievement plan and report biennially on the plan and recommended changes to the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee (JLEOC) beginning October 1, 2014.
- Within 30 days of enrollment, developmental assessments of kindergarten students must be conducted, and within 60 days of enrollment, kindergarten entry assessments must be completed. Assessment results must be used to inform instruction, reduce the achievement gap, and improve the early childhood system. Diagnostic and formative assessments must be used for K-3 students to determine difficulty with reading development, and difficulties must be addressed with instructional supports and services. Identification of students who are at risk of academic failure and not progressing toward grade promotion must begin in kindergarten.
- A student who fails to demonstrate third grade reading proficiency on a State-approved standardized test of reading comprehension must be retained in third grade, unless the student meets one of certain good cause exemptions to the retention requirement. Exemptions include limited English proficiency, disability, demonstrated proficiency on an alternative reading test or student portfolio, or multiple retentions. Retained students must be enrolled in summer reading camps, and may be promoted upon a showing of reading proficiency on an alternative assessment following the camp. Students not demonstrating proficiency must be retained and provided with a successful reading teacher in an accelerated reading or transitional 3rd-4th grade classroom where specific reading instruction takes place. Students demonstrating reading proficiency by November 1 may be promoted midyear under a policy developed by the SBE. Parents must be notified of third grade retention policies, and must be given monthly written reports regarding student progress for retained students.
- Local boards of education must annually report to the SBE and publish on their websites information about numbers and percentages of third graders demonstrating reading proficiency, retained, or exempt from retention for good cause. The SBE must report the information to the Governor, the President Pro Tempore of the Senate, the Speaker of the House of Representatives, and the JLEOC by October 1, beginning with the 2014-2015 school year.
- Charter schools must retain in third grade a student who fails to demonstrate third grade reading proficiency on a State-approved test of reading comprehension unless the student meets a good cause exemption, must provide notice to parents on retention and reading interventions, and must annually publish on their websites and report to the SBE statistics on reading proficiency, retention, and good cause exceptions.

This section of S.L. 2012-142 became effective July 1, 2012, and applied beginning with the 2013-2014 school year. The developmental screening and kindergarten entry assessment, as amended by Section 3.9 of S.L. 2013-363, will be administered statewide beginning with the 2015-2016 school year.

## Statutory Definitions Used in the Read to Achieve Program

### § 115C-83.3. Definitions.

The following definitions apply in this Part:

- (1) "Accelerated reading class" means a class where focused instructional supports and services are provided to increase a student's reading level at least two grades in one school year.
- (2) "Alternative assessment" means a valid and reliable standardized assessment of reading comprehension, approved by the State Board of Education, that is not the same test as the State-approved standardized test of reading comprehension administered to third grade students.
- (3) "Difficulty with reading development" means not demonstrating appropriate developmental abilities in any of the major reading areas, including, but not limited to, oral language, phonological or phonemic awareness, vocabulary, fluency, or comprehension, according to observation-based, diagnostic, or formative assessments.
- (4) "Instructional supports and services" mean intentional strategies used with a majority of students to facilitate reading development and remediate emerging difficulty with reading development. Instructional supports and services include, but are not limited to, small group instruction, reduced teacher-student ratios, frequent progress monitoring, and extended learning time.
- (5) "Reading deficiency" means not reading at the third grade level by the end of the student's third grade year, demonstrated by the results of the State-approved standardized test of reading comprehension administered to third grade students.
- (6) "Reading interventions" mean evidence-based strategies frequently used to remediate reading deficiencies and include, but are not limited to, individual instruction, tutoring, or mentoring that target specific reading skills and abilities.
- (7) "Reading proficiency" means reading at or above the third grade level by the end of a student's third grade year, demonstrated by the results of the State-approved standardized test of reading comprehension administered to third grade students.
- (8) "Student reading portfolio" means a compilation of independently produced student work selected by the student's teacher, and signed by the teacher and principal, as an accurate picture of the student's reading ability. The student reading portfolio shall include an organized collection of evidence of the student's mastery of the State's reading standards that are assessed by the State-approved standardized test of reading comprehension administered to third grade students. For each benchmark, there shall be three examples of student work demonstrating mastery by a grade of seventy percent (70%) or above.
- (9) "Summer reading camp" means an additional educational program outside of the instructional calendar provided by the local school administrative unit to any student who does not demonstrate reading proficiency. Parents or guardians of the student not demonstrating reading proficiency shall make the final decision regarding the student's summer camp attendance. Summer camps shall (i) be six to eight weeks long, four or five days per week; (ii) include at least three hours of instructional time per day; (iii) be taught by compensated, licensed teachers selected based on demonstrated student outcomes in reading proficiency; and (iv) allow volunteer mentors to read with students.
- (10) "Transitional third and fourth class combination" means a classroom specifically designed to produce learning gains sufficient to meet fourth grade performance standards while continuing to remediate areas of reading deficiency. (2012-142, s. 7A.1(b).)